

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 21, 2003

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I recently traveled with seven other members of Congress to Iraq to visit our troops, meet with military and civilian leaders, and get a first-hand assessment of the security and reconstruction activities in Iraq. It was inspiring to see our military men and women performing their duties in difficult and often dangerous conditions without complaint. Their selfless service to our nation during this difficult time is critical to America's success in the international war on terrorism, and in ensuring a secure and stable Iraq. I join you in commending their sacrifice.

In Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District, we have two Army National Guard units and one Army Reserve unit currently serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The families of these approximately 400 Guard and Reserve members are proud that their loved ones are serving in defense of our nation. They hope, as we all do, that our military missions in Iraq can be completed successfully and as soon as possible so that service members can return home to their families and resume their lives.

While the soldiers I talked to are proud to serve their country and perform their duties in Iraq, I join the families of the National Guard and Reserve members of western Wisconsin with serious concern over the lack of certainty in deployment length. This was demonstrated by the Army's recent change in rotation schedule imposed on National Guard and Reserve units serving in support of OIF.

It is understandable that changing circumstances can demand additional service from our National Guard and Reserve units beyond their original end date. However, the difficulties such action places on the service members and their families, both financially and emotionally, are serious and must not be ignored. Further, extending rotation schedules and requiring reserve component members to serve on active duty for longer than one year may have significant consequences on future retention and recruitment efforts.

Predictability in mobilization and deployment times is of crucial importance to the men and women of the Guard and Reserve and their families. Given their commitment to the defense of our nation, we owe them dependable information on how long their service is required whenever possible.

As a member of Congress, I am committed to ensuring our armed forces have every resource they need to successfully complete their missions. I am also committed to ensuring that their quality of life while serving overseas is the best that can be provided, and that when serving alongside our active forces, Reserve and Guard troops are treated to equal attention and resources. This is particularly important regarding access to satellite phones and other means of contacting their families back home.

I was very impressed with what I saw happening in Iraq and the ability of our service men and women to adapt and respond to the challenges around them. By ensuring predictability in rotation schedules for our Guard and Reserve units, and providing all our armed forces the materials needed to fulfill their mission, we can make sure that the mission in front of them stays the primary focus.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Kind". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Cc: Secretary Donald Rumsfeld
General Richard Myers, JCS Chairman
General John Abizaid, US CENTCOM